

FAO Mr Guy Attenborough
Interim Head of Communications
AHDB
Area 2B
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London
SW1P 3JR

31 October 2008

Dear Sir

Consultation on food supply chain quality schemes and branding.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above. The Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) is the largest farming organisation in Northern Ireland and as such would like to make the following comments.

The Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) Seeds & Cereals Policy Committee has responded to this consultation as cereal producers and payers of levy. The Committee do hold a degree of concern as to the possible impact this may have ultimately on our other Northern Ireland agricultural commodities who sit outside the Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board structure. Mindful of these concerns the UFU Seeds & Cereals Policy committee discussed the questions and have responded as follows:

Question 1 Should AHDB invest levy payers money to promote the quality and standards of its sectors products?

It is the view of the UFU that AHDB should invest levy payers money in the most effective and efficient manner to promote the quality and standards of its sectors products. UFU are mindful that each sectors produce is a small part of a global food market chain and all opportunities should be embraced to differentiate their product.

Question 2 Does there need to be a rationalisation of existing quality marks?

The independent evidence presented by AHDB clearly suggests that consumers are telling us they are confused by the number of quality marks and logos. We as a Union would strongly support rationalisation of all quality marks, delivering longer term cost savings to the sectors.

Question 3 Should AHDB invest levy funds to promote uptake within the industry, police the proper use of a mark and build consumer awareness about the quality and standards of all sector products?

The UFU support the proposals and endorse the need for its widespread use and proper rigorous enforcement in the supply chain. Consumer understanding and trust in the quality mark are necessary components of any successful quality mark.

- Question 4** If levy payer money was to be invested, should AHDB:
- a) Create a new scheme?
 - b) Adopt the RTL scheme as it is now? Or
 - c) Integrate existing standards in the beef and sheep sector into the RTL scheme?

It is the view of the UFU that best use of levy payers money is to build upon the quality mark already valued by our consumers. From the independent survey completed by AHDB the findings clearly suggest the Red Tractor quality mark had been adopted widely by the major multiples. The same independent survey found consumers want fewer logos and quality marks so this strongly suggests the need to integrate existing standards in the beef and sheep sector into the TRL scheme.

- Question 5** In your sector, which products or market segments do you believe would most benefit from the promotion of quality characteristics (either general quality characteristics common to your sector and other sectors or ones specific to your sector)? Would you support levy payers' money being invested in this promotion?

The UFU support the proposal that each individual sector should be given the opportunity to invest in the promotion of specific quality characteristics in addition to any or all baseline funding. All sectors must individually identify their own additional needs and budgets and follow all RTL protocols.

- Question 6** If in your view, no products in your sector would benefit from promoting such a scheme (beyond a baseline investment outlined in paragraph 21); would you accept other AHDB sectors working together at a sector level on such a scheme through AHDB?

The UFU suggest that this will be a sector by sector decision and those who wish to partnership and work together should be encouraged to do so. Co-operation and joint funding promotional activities can often deliver greater success and value for money.

- Question 7** Do you support levy funded investment even though this will mean that EU guidelines for promotion would need to be observed by all parties participating in the scheme throughout the supply chain even where private funds were invested?

We at UFU acknowledge that EU guide lines for promotion must be observed, we doubt that any additional layers of bureaucracy are necessary and promote best practice and adherence of existing guidance by all participants.

I trust the above comments will be fully considered, and should you require further clarification then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

Robert Moore

Robert Moore
Chairman UFU Seeds & Cereals Policy Committee